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FORMERLY "THE LIBRARY ASSISTANT"  
OFFICIAL JOURNAL OF THE A.A.L.

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# THE ASSISTANT LIBRARIAN

Official Journal of the Association of Assistant Librarians

(Section of the Library Association)

Edited by A. C. Jones, Hornsey Public Libraries.

VOL. 47, NO. 7

AUGUST, 1954

## EDITORIAL

MR. HUTCHINGS can have no cause for complaint about the reception which is being accorded to his recently voiced criticisms of the A.A.L. In his own Division and elsewhere they are being made the occasion for serious re-examination of the Association's function and policy, and although there is little evidence of agreement with either his premises or his conclusions, we must be grateful at least for the opportunity of seeing ourselves as the Honorary Treasurer of the L.A. sees us.

Here and now we are concerned with but one small item in Mr. Hutchings' catalogue of our shortcomings. He is reported to have said that, though claiming to be a forum for the youngsters in the profession, the A.A.L. is in fact a forum for those rising and over forty—"an old guard living in the past." We do not know on what evidence this assertion is based. Perhaps Mr. Hutchings confuses the forum with the senate, though it is our impression that forty is a trifle high for the average age of even the A.A.L. Council.

The active membership at large, for whom we certainly claim to provide a forum in our meetings and in the pages of this journal, are far from being the collection of middle-aged stick-in-the-muds envisaged by Mr. Hutchings. So far as we know no accurate estimate has hitherto been made of the average age of our more active members, but with their co-operation we are now able to state that that of the contributors to the last ten issues of this journal (excluding the three chief librarians whom we have been glad to welcome) is 28 years. No similar figure is available for members who take advantage of the forum provided by our meetings, but we have examined instead a representative Divisional Committee—that of Greater London, our largest Division. Their average age proved to be 32, and we are surely entitled to assume that the average age and experience of a Divisional Committee is somewhat greater than that of the members who take part in its meetings.

The constitution of the two groups mentioned above are as follows:

	Contributors to <i>Assistant Librarian</i> .	Members of G.L.D. Committee.
Age group.		
20—25	12	2
25—30	5	7
30—35	8	8
35—40	2	3
Over 40	2	2
Average age	28	32

Not 'over forty,' Mr. Hutchings. Nor yet 'rising forty.' And these are present ages; at the time of contributing, or of election to the Committee, they would have been some six months lower. These

are figures with which we, as an Association of *Assistant Librarians*, can feel well pleased. They amply justify our claim to provide a forum for younger members—for those who, beginning to find their feet and their opinions, seek the opportunity of standing on the one and voicing the other. And as a body concerned largely with tuition, we find nothing incongruous in the active participation in our affairs of some older and more experienced members of the profession who still have the interests of their younger colleagues at heart.

## 59th ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING

THE MINUTES of the 59th Annual General Meeting, which was held at Chaucer House on May 20th, are but the dry bones of what proved to be the longest and brightest Annual General Meeting for years. This despite the fact that the Minutes were taken as read, the Annual Report and Financial Statement formally accepted, and the formula for the appointment of Auditors observed with the usual brevity. There were, however, between this point and Mr. O'Leary's mounting the rostrum, four motions to be put and considered. The first was: *Having in mind the impetus it could give to original research by members, and the beneficial effect it must have on the status of the profession, this Annual General Meeting instructs the A.A.L. Council to consider what representations should be made to the Library Association regarding the general reintroduction of the essay or thesis, or the compilation of a bibliography, either as part of the Final Examination or as a voluntary post-Fellowship undertaking, which was finally accepted by the meeting with the deletion of "either as part of the Final Examination or".* There were many good points made on both sides. Those in favour stressed the need for giving opportunities for independent thought and the exercise of those mental qualities the profession demands. Others talked of prestige, bemoaning the fact that "we are in the shallow end of A.P.T.", and that our only salvation lay in an increase in our prestige, not as local government officers, but as professionals doing a highly-skilled job. On the other hand, someone who saw the whole future of bibliography vested in co-operative effort, forecast an enormous cluster of half-baked bibliographers "not shooting up with the rockets, but going down with the sticks"—or did he say "down the Styx"? The opposition to any monkeying or further monkeying with the syllabus was very strong, hence the deletion, but the principle was accepted, a particularly good point being made by two people who had derived benefit from a study of theses.

It appears that for a long time there has been an under-represented minority, namely, the Greater London Division, there being one G.L.D. representative for nearly three times as many members as those represented by some of their provincial opposite numbers. This fact had already been recognised by the Council, and a motion to increase the Greater London representation was carried *nem con*, with no serious sign of metropolitan-provincial rivalry beyond humorous references to the home towns of the President and the Honorary Secretary—than whom few can be more geographically provincial.

Messrs. Surridge and Bill then set out to suggest that *this Annual Meeting instructs the A.A.L. Council to consider making the necessary arrangements so that defaulting members of the A.A.L. should continue to receive copies of the "Assistant Librarian" until the December of the year in which they default, instead of, as at present, June, but only 26 of those present were so minded, and the meeting therefore confirmed*

a view which had been expressed even more forcibly by the Council.

The meeting then passed to a consideration of Mr. W. G. Smith's motion: *That this meeting considers it wrong to deprive students of any part of a correspondence course for which payment has been made. It, therefore, instructs the A.A.L. Council to consider making arrangements for all correspondence course students to receive a complete set of printed lessons.* The meeting heard an animated discussion, set going by Mr. Smith, whose rhetoric is already widely appreciated, and opposed with vigour by Mr. Tomlinson, on behalf of the Council. It was pleasing and in the best traditions of the Association to hear personal exchanges which were free of all rancour. Indeed, the debate was an excellent advertisement for the correspondence course system, and according to Mrs. Martin, was making a mountain out of a molehill, because it affected so very, very few, and was very far from new. A count from the platform was obviously an unsatisfactory way of solving the problem of the vote, for with over 200 people present, the rows seemed to stretch into eternity and the aisles were packed, so we stretched our legs in the luxury of a division, with the result that by 106 votes to 78, the Council have been instructed to consider the views of the meeting.

W.T.

\* \* \* \* \*

Mr. O'Leary arose on the crest of a wave of excitement and high good humour, though his art needs no such stimulation. In the short time remaining at his disposal he pursued through many anecdotal by-ways the subject of self-help for assistants through their devotion to books and learning. Only a devotion beyond the formal demands of public service would enable an assistant librarian to achieve the full life through his work. Recompense would come not financially, but in increased personal satisfaction. Mr. O'Leary underlined many of the arguments put forward earlier in the course of discussion on the subject of a post-fellowship thesis.

Those who were fortunate enough to be in town during the afternoon had enjoyed an admirably organized visit to the Old Vic theatre production of *The Tempest*, followed by tea beside the river. The efficient arrangements made by the G.L.D. Committee for this Annual Meeting contributed as much to its success as did the motions, put forward for the most part by individual members of the same Committee.

### A.A.L. CORRESPONDENCE COURSES

Students are reminded that completed application forms, together with the appropriate fees, for the courses beginning in October and November, must reach Mrs. L. Martin, Carnegie Library, Herne Hill Road, London, S.E.24, on or before 30th September, 1954, after which date no application will be considered. Earlier receipt is advisable and would be greatly appreciated.

Full particulars of the courses offered are given in the current *Students' Handbook*.

*Revision Courses.* A limited number

of *Registration* and *Final* courses are available to run from September to December. These short period courses are reserved exclusively for those students who have already sat the examination in the subjects required.

Applications for revision courses must be made by 31st August or within one week after publication of the examination results, whichever is later.

*Fees.* The fee per course is £2 7s. 6d., plus 10s. extra to students in Africa, America, Asia and Australasia.

# A DEGREE OF SUFFICIENCY

## THE EXTERNAL STUDENT AND HIS PROBLEMS

D. E. GERARD, *Liverpool P.L.*

THERE COMES a moment in the career of the (occasional) Fellow when he realises that saturation point is not enough. Admirable though the fact undeniably be that he reached it in—what?—4 years? 5 years? or less, he has nevertheless not, he feels, achieved the ultimate goal. Fulfilment, he uneasily reflects, is not his completely. While his confrères and contemporaries are indulging in various improprieties like marriage, the organisation of Youth Clubs, or the compilation of library textbooks, he remains nebulously dissatisfied, out of touch with these mundane pre-occupations, insulated against the possibility of such simple satiety. He aspires to express himself on more Olympian lines—he would be a mental Titan. Not for him the trivial paths of the everyday, but instead the exciting exploration of the arcane. His head spinning, he longs to earn himself some of that universal acclaim and recognition not generally bestowed on the letters F.L.A. His roseate dreams are haunted by the ermine and the hood flapping beckoningly at him; in short, he contemplates, with many a preliminary flutter, and much self-questioning, a degree. A *real* degree. The badge of explicit merit, known equally from Elgin to Accra, the noble means by which to enhance his reputation, illumine his prospects, and richly endow him with psychoneuroses.

Of such a hero, his progress and his pitfalls, do I, an impenitent member of the laudable minority group not yet in receipt of the accolade, propose to write. A few observations *en passant* about the exigencies of degree-taking as a hobby may be of mildly eccentric interest to both the curious and the incredulous amongst our readers. It is still the occupation of the very few (the force of this will shortly be made evident), so that these lines are subscribed with touching solicitude primarily to the very few of the next generation whose dreams have been set ablaze by like ambitions.

Let it be said right at the start that we shall not dally over motives. The reasons why people take degrees in their spare time are as various as the people who take them. Their minds are a muddle of hopes, a whole compendium of desires: to please, to show off, to indulge a genuine interest, to enrich an outlook, to increase professional status, to substitute for a previous failure, to escape from unrewarding circumstances. The whole complex is a bewildering psychological jigsaw which we have no need to play with here. It will be far more relevant, and possibly more useful, to examine the peculiar problems of the External Student, the advantages he enjoys, and to suggest ways of overcoming the one, and exploiting the other.

\* \* \*

As members of a community, we are all bound to modify, and in turn to be modified by, people and circumstances. By feeding information, observation, and commentary into another living being we elicit a response no less surely than the response elicited, at a mechanical level, in the electronic brain. The process of learning is two-way in just this sense. As a student, I will receive and I will in turn give (information from a textbook; attention to a Tutor). It is a group process, and the first thing an External Student must remember is that although he is working alone, he is part—at any given time—of a particular group working on a particular set of absolute or relative facts. It can be shown that, to learn successfully, the process of two-way collaboration must be



clearly understood by our Aspirant to degreehood. He is *not* a phenomenon, he is part of the (why shirk the word?) herd. And, inexorably, to bring his learning to a successful conclusion in terms of marks gained and pass standards, he must harmonise with the herd's wishes. In the struggle to achieve a degree this means he must find out at once what are the conventions of current academic thought and identify himself with them. Obviously, the Internal Student will be much nearer the centres of academic thought, and able to keep pace more readily, since he is literally part of the atmosphere in which such thought is developed. The External Student must counter this big disadvantage by cultivating as much "feed-back" as possible from his own contacts (Correspondence Courses, Part-time Classes, Individuals who know the ground and may help). Observation of what others are doing always yields valuable returns in increased experience and improved performance. To summarise the above we might say: the associational process by which learning is assimilated is vital for morale and easy for the Internal Student who can get on familiar terms with his examiners (we do not suggest by this a pint in the pub on the eve of exam. day) and knows all the peccadilloes of his Tutors. The External Student must try to minimise his major disadvantage by getting to know in general terms—it can never be on a personal level—the prevalent modes of University scholarship, and fall in with them.

Major advantage, then, would appear to go to the Internal Student—as if the underprivileged sufferer on part-time rations didn't know without constructing a rationale about it. Yes, but if we consider this advantage, we can soon see that it may become a disadvantage if the Internal Student allows himself to be uncritically receptive to whatever his contemporary "herd" gives out. The herd opinion of his year may condition him completely into morbid acceptance of one single line of approach dictated by his University. The corollary to this is the automatic rejection of anything which by its novelty or its challenge creates discomfort mentally, or is not tolerated by his group. The External Student is not so fettered. He is frighteningly free to pursue whatever course he deems most profitable, uncensored by any one academic coterie, and blithely uninfluenced by any single individual Professor. The possibilities of turning this particular situation to advantage are undeniable, but the External Student must show skill, patience and abnormal percipience if he is to realise the benefits consequent upon untrammelled study. For what *could* be advantageous is itself fraught with dangers. He tends to be unrelated to other people working in the same field, so that while he is immune from the danger of academic thought control, he is subject to the equally potent danger of excommunication—not of course, by proclamation, but simply because he is isolated from verbal intercourse with fellow-students. His communications are uncertain, short-lived and often confusing in their import and relevance, because he lives mainly on snippets, potted notes and the stale jottings of evening class Tutors. Continuity is a word he has to look up. It has no practical meaning for him, and it never can have any because of the nature of his approach, an approach bereft of the meaning at the heart of real studentship.

So what does this add up to? That the Internal Student has more chance (despite permeation by Authority) of properly assimilating his material, and conversely, that the External Student, in order to employ his own freedom to good effect, must at least overcome his isolation. How can he do this? The rhetorical question suggests to the present writer an answer on some such lines as these (if any reader of this would

amend, discard, or concur, I hope he will be provoked to the point of communicating his feelings): surely the most essential need for an External Student at degree level is the same essential need (in a more sharpened and focused form) of any member of society—to *belong*. He has got to integrate himself into the larger world of learning without the tangible stimulus of argument with people in the same field. He must learn not to feel an outsider, taking humble advantage of one single University's goodness in admitting him to the heights (but not, of course, presuming to instruct him). That problem is the heart of the matter, and is purely psychological. The rest, i.e., the details of practical study routine, is purely mechanical. A suggested synthesis of the practical problems involved is appended at the end. But it is the search for a synthesis at the human level that gives rise to the pallid, abstracted look so readily distinguishing the External Student. He doesn't know it, but that's why he frowns.

And now, before our prose becomes any more pallid and abstracted, let us cite the case history of an Aspirant to degree status the back way.

Firstly, our Aspirant will look for some central guidance towards his goal. The University of London, benevolently ready to bestow the accolade on the successful one, will yet make no more concessions to enlightenment on the journey than a reading list and a few sparse, deathly cautious notes. The first he could easily deduce from a look through the official syllabus, the second will be of sterile inconsequence. So, apathetically thumbing the Regulations, and picking vaguely at the myriad titles displayed for his earnest perusal, he will begin to feel of unlikely value and only peripheral interest to that Authority enshrined in them. A fringe man, shuffling about looking for an opening. Then, naturally, the unconscious need to move closer to the heart of the matter prompts him to acquaint himself with the torch-bearers of the Part-timers—the Correspondence Colleges. On the iniquities of the bad ones, the resplendent virtues of the good, we need not descant here. Suffice it that it be the next, the inevitable step. With the arrival of the first, conciliatory lesson he feels more at ease, even exhilarated. (He is the kind to be braced by the prospect of mental work on a subject for which he has due regard, dear reader. He is as quaint as that). And as the taut, muscular notes, the admirable replicas of exam. questions, plus the model solutions flutter through the letter-box month after month, his initial exhilaration is—unless he has an unfeeling family, demanding friends, or unresolved inner tensions—generally maintained. But (how inevitable that “but” was) he is aware increasingly of growing dissatisfaction and, *horresco referens*, a spreading dullness.

And here we have artfully contrived to lead up to a reiteration of the main point of the argument: the Aspirant's increasing dullness is not due to weight of work, high calorific output and low intake, but simply to lack of integration. Appetite for work will increase with what it feeds on, and our Aspirant's diet is certainly steady enough; there will be no lack of foodstuffs, but the diet is monotonous when it comes in tersely printed typescripts and regulated commentaries through the post. He has not yet come measurably near participation in the world of learning, and will not as long as he lacks personal contacts. The most dazzling thesis on paper is no substitute for a stretch of dialogue with an immediately accessible mentor.

In search of guide, philosopher and friend, the plodder joins an Evening Class, finds himself talking turkey to a cynic with a story of success behind him, a cynic smiling benevolently (he can afford to) and

making large and leisurely suggestions for the improvement of morale. But our Aspirant, nevertheless, finds the contact stimulating, if tantalisingly brief. He can unload his anxiety neuroses temporarily and unlock his word-hoard once a week to some purpose. In the process of being unconsciously modified, he discovers a new strength, new lines of approach, and new *points d'appui*. However tangential may seem the angle of the Tutor, it is a factor in the learning, and even his most blatant irrelevancies help to implant confidence. The present deponent, on grounds of time and some areas of disagreement on principles, withdrew from a W.E.A. class, and has since regretted it. By so doing, he cut himself off from a source of feed-back, and no amount of rationalising his action would ever compensate for his loss.

So, to the rare reader who might be clasping and unclasping his hands in nervous exaltation of mind, or agony of indecision, we would cordially advise modest exploration locally into possible sources of feed-back, followed by ruthless cultivation when the time comes. The people who can help are more numerous than you may suppose: they may number several among your colleagues at the library, and you will find this particular source richer than many a commercialised pedagogy. To the man or woman of mind sound enough to contemplate with enthusiasm a part-time degree, we shout welcome and end with a woefully practical touch, a kind of philosophy of study routine.

The actual business of organising your time, and canalising your energy to best advantage involves two factors:—

1. *Management of the Man.*

- (a) Methods of learning and study.
- (b) Allocation of priorities in your time-table.
- (c) Methods of revision.

2. *Management of the Material.*

- (a) Priorities as between polemical and rote-learning material.
- (b) Technique of sources and quotations.
- (c) Pelmanistic approach to the syllabus.

1a. First clear the decks for action. Assemble everything, textbooks, notebooks, stylus, etc. Rid the mind of extraneous concerns; 'phone Sybil and get it over with, throw your copy of the *Reader's Digest* out of the window, pre-arrange it so that there will be no callers—not even unexpected ones. Thrust the world unequivocally away. Then you are in a position to do more in 10 minutes than you might otherwise achieve in two hours. Remember that regular breaks are better than continuous labour; 45-minute periods combined with rotation of crops (i.e. *do* change the subject) is immensely productive. Fatigue is notably lessened by these methods, and much inter-play of light is thrown from one subject to another if rotation is kept going.

1b. Priorities will declare themselves as you contemplate the curriculum. But be very clear which you make of first importance (probably your weakest topics) and give them plenty of your time. It is most vital not to dissipate your precious hours indulging what you like doing. Be a Spartan, and tolerate the unendurable remorselessly.

1c. Revision methods must be regarded as special efforts put into the last six months, principally designed to test how much matter has sunk into the oblivion of your sub-conscious, to be salvaged at the last minute. Most of the lost sediment will be in the parts where you are "resistive" unconsciously, and unamenable to the subject. You must isolate your weaknesses and emend what you can in the time available.

2a. Priorities as between polemical and rote-learning material. Get to know by prior acquaintance with the exam. papers previously set just what proportion is devoted to what. Devote a minimum proportion of time to either *a.* areas which need not interest you, or *b.* areas which are evidently considered of lesser importance.

2b. The quotation is, as the meanest novice at these things well knows, a *sine qua non* of success in examinations. Spend time, therefore, in the pious accumulation of such snippets from other men's bouquets. Of course you don't have to read the books which contain the precious words (in case any serious student should rebuke me for this licentious remark, let me say that any such feat would be beyond the powers of the ersatz undergraduate anyway)—read the *reviews* of the books, watch for quotable quotes everywhere, and even quotes within quotes.

2c. Pelmanistic approach. The parlour games recommended by the Pelman Institute have always seemed to one enquirer at least to be off the point, but some of the habits acquired by such exercises might be remembered. Sharpen the attention to a fine focus—especially in the closing weeks—cut out the reading of *anything* extraneous eventually, e.g., newspapers and periodicals, and any portions of critical works which don't have immediate bearing.

It is not supposed that the above discursive jottings have solved any problems or even clinched any waverers. The purpose of them was to explore to some feeble extent the activities of the mind of an External Student, to try and analyse what was his greatest need, and suggest that he pays attention to it. Complete remedy there is none. A partial, unsatisfactory solution is all that can be offered, and the realist in this field soon knows this. If he is interested enough to proceed, he will find the effort has unsuspected rewards—what is it? Something about *finis coronat opus*?

## SCIENCE-FICTION TODAY

H. G. STOCKTON, *Battersea P.L.*

WE LIVE in an age of swift technological advance, and science-fiction seems to be a significant phenomenon of that age. It is represented in all mass media of entertainment and of the communication of ideas—radio, television, the cinema, and the world of books. However, before we can hope to understand the reason for this, and weigh the merits of the various kinds of science-fiction, we must know something of the background of this modern "phenomenon." Most critics of science-fiction seem to be unaware of this background, and so condemn all forms of "scientific fiction" out of hand, despite the existence of a responsible school of writers in the *genre*. That, and also the fact that most science-fiction, by its very nature, stresses plot and incident rather than character.

It is well known that inaccuracy in definition of terms leads to confusion, and few terms are more abused than "science-fiction," particularly by those critics who have read a few cheap paper-backed novels and feel that this qualifies them to write as experts. Obviously this is inadequate preparation for a balanced judgment, which should be based on excursive reading and an historical approach.

The history of modern science-fiction begins in the U.S.A. in 1926, when a magazine was founded by Hugo Gernsback devoted entirely to

the publication of imaginative writing of this type. The existence of an outlet for their work encouraged a school of writers of no outstanding literary merit (or pretension), but each endowed with a powerful imagination. The stories were mainly of the "adventure" science-fiction type—what is now called the "space-opera," even by those who enjoy it. Co-existent with this during the next decade was the "gadget" story, which usually consisted of an explanation in unconvincing jargon of some new invention, supplied complete with interlocking toggle spring and Mad Scientist. The stories were published in "pulp" magazines, so-called because of the bulky paper, composed mainly of M.W.P., used in their construction. They usually found their way to secondhand-magazine stalls of this country in the form of ballast in ships trading with the U.S.A.

In the middle-Thirties a new type of story became important—"social" science-fiction, which was concerned with the impact of science on Society. Whereas the "gadget" story might be concerned with the invention of, say, a television set, "social" science-fiction would envisage the effect of the invention on family life, reading habits, and any other consequences that might occur to the writer. It is a long way from the cathode tube to panic in Hollywood, but they are, of course, connected! The magazine editor played the important part in this change of emphasis, and the outstanding personality among them is John W. Campbell (he wrote the story on which was based the film "The Thing from another world") who became editor of *Astounding Stories* in 1938, and made this magazine the most powerful single influence in the development of the kind of science-fiction most popular at the moment. The stories which appeared in the magazine during the years 1939-46 caused one well-qualified observer to term this period "the Golden Age of science-fiction". Writers from this period are Asimov, Heinlein, Simak, van Vogt, and many others (the one outstanding exception being Ray Bradbury).

After the atomic bomb was dropped in 1945 the better kinds of science-fiction began to appear in "slick" magazines in the U.S.A. Robert Heinlein (who wrote the story for the film "Destination—Moon") contributed a series of stories to the *Saturday Evening Post*, other magazines following suit. Anthologies of short stories began to be published in hard-back editions, a development which surprised and delighted regular readers of science-fiction, and dismayed and perplexed our colleagues across the Atlantic.

Publishers found that these early science-fiction books sold 50 per cent. more copies (in the U.S.A.) than "Westerns" or "Mysteries," and continued to sell slowly but steadily, so that it paid to have titles remain in print.

In this country imports from the U.S.A. dominate the field to a large extent. The better British writers sell their work to American literary agencies, and most original science-fiction published here is of the "adventure" type which was superseded 15 years ago. The cheapest of these novels can usually be spotted by their titles—*Atomic Freak meets Superman*, *The Purple Wizard*—and obvious pseudonyms: Astron del Martia; Volstead Gridban. British publishers who are taking advantage of the vast demand for science-fiction must perforce cross the Atlantic for new material. Sad to relate, some of the books which have been acquired in this way have only been partial reprints, and the outstanding collection of short stories up to this time, the Healy-McComas *Adventures in time and space*, was cut from 35 short stories to 10 when published by Grayson and Grayson.

Before we examine the quality of the science fiction which is being produced now, it is necessary to decide whether it is considered essential that the "science" to be found in fictional stories should be valid in terms of present-day knowledge. "Extrapolation" is the word which is most often applied by readers of science-fiction to an attempt to forecast future scientific discoveries and their applications. Indeed, it has been claimed by one well-known writer that "every significant technical device of the past quarter-century has been described beforehand in a science-fiction story. One American author who wrote a story about the atomic bomb in 1944 was honoured with a visit from F.B.I. agents to find out if there had been a security leak.

So we must distinguish between those stories which make the attempt to keep the science "pure," and those where the author's imagination is allowed to roam unrestrained. Robert Heinlein considers this matter most important, and in a recent article in the *Library Journal* even goes so far as to recommend that the librarian has all science-fiction vetted by scientists to see if the scientific content is valid! Others hold the view that whether or not the science is valid, the story may still be outstanding as a work of imaginative literature. Perhaps I might draw an analogy with the historical novel here. Miss C. V. Wedgwood said recently that the important thing about the historical novel "is that it should be a good novel, not that it should be in the scholastic sense good history." No! Science-fiction should be judged not merely for its scientific content, but by those qualities of exposition, motivation, syntax, "readability," and so on, by which we normally judge creative writing.

Finally we come to consider the reasons why science-fiction is so popular at this time. It has little to do with the older types of imaginative writing: the novels of Verne and Wells with their "spelled-out scientific minutiae." Most readers to-day read them from a sense of duty, because Jules Verne anticipated many future inventions (the submarine, for example), and because H. G. Wells was the first to introduce many of the basic ideas of science-fiction, including time travel. However, scientific knowledge has progressed so fast and far since these stories were written, that they became "old-fashioned" many years ago. It should also be borne in mind that these stories have been continuously available during the past half-century, and that there is no evidence connecting them with the present demand. It is fashionable to suggest that the demand was due to the opening of the Atomic Age, but this may be due to the error of logic known as *post hoc ergo propter hoc*. An alternative theory is that science-fiction is mere escapist literature, but this cannot be the sole reason why it has so many faithful readers, for if they simply wanted pastime reading there are several alternatives which require far less application. Arthur Koestler has said that "a craze of such dimensions is never entirely crazy. It always expresses in a distorted way some unconscious need of our time." This "need" must be connected with the world in which we find ourselves—a world of violent change and sudden technological advancement. When Professor J. Bronowski was acting as teacher to young science students in the U.S.A., he found that they were all regular readers of science-fiction and regarded it as the "literature of dissent" where unorthodox ideas might be aired.

The real reason why science-fiction is so popular to-day would be hard to discover with certainty, but those who fall under its spell find it most exciting and stimulating. When the first rocket ship lands successfully on the Moon we may find it is not so divorced from reality as we think, and the man who makes the trip will no doubt take a few science-fiction novels along to read on the way.

# A.A.L. MEMBERSHIP ORGANIZATION

by WALTER F. BROOME, *Hon. Membership Secretary.*

WHAT HAPPENS when a new (or old) member pays his subscription to the Library Association and opts for membership of the A.A.L.? (You will remember to opt for the A.A.L. at the same time as you pay, won't you?) Briefly, this.

A receipt is despatched showing exactly how he has opted. From the point of view of this Association the next step is that the name and address of the member are recorded on the Section Capitation List. Copies of this list are sent at the end of each month by the Secretary of the Library Association to the Membership Secretary of the A.A.L. As soon as he receives them they are distributed to the Secretaries or Membership Secretaries of the fifteen Divisions throughout the country.

The task of the Divisional Officer is to extract for local attention the names and addresses of all members shown to be within the boundaries of the area for which he is responsible. By the 10th of each month addressed labels are prepared and forwarded to the Central Office. These labels are used for the distribution by post of the *Assistant Librarian* for the issue immediately following. Whenever possible copies of the journal are distributed in parcels addressed to a volunteer who has offered to act as "A.A.L. Representative" in a Library or system. As soon as he receives the parcel, the "A.A.L. Representative" distributes the copies to individuals according to the list of members supplied to him. He also encourages the interest of the staff in the A.A.L. and notifies the Divisional Membership Secretary of assistants who intimate their intention to become members of the Section.

Annually, in July, a check of all the members is carried out to reveal those who have not opted for membership, or who have not paid their subscription to the Library Association for the current year. If a member fails to opt for membership of the Section by 1st July in any year he ceases to have a right to vote in elections and to receive the journal. That is why it is so important that *all* members should pay their subscriptions to the Library Association before 30th June each year and at the same time indicate their desire to be included in the membership of the A.A.L. If any member fails to do this the Divisional Membership Secretary is advised by the Hon. Membership Secretary to tell the A.A.L. Representative to strike off that member from his list.

The A.A.L. Representative is also responsible to the Divisional Membership Secretary for notifying him when members (a) leave the system for another post; (b) leave the profession; (c) leave for exchange overseas; so that the journal may continue to reach them. This is ensured by the Divisional Membership Secretary passing on the information to the Division into which the member has moved.

Members in Scotland, Ireland and all countries overseas receive their journal as a result of action taken at the Central Office. Members at full time Library Schools also receive their copies by virtue of action taken in co-operation with Principals of Schools by the Central Office. It must be pointed out, however, that students at Library Schools become entitled to receive a copy of the journal through this channel only if they have opted for membership of the Section. *As soon as the course is ended and the student returns to a post in a Library it is his responsibility to notify the local A.A.L. Representative so that delivery of the journal may be continued.* Parcels will not be sent to Library Schools between the end of one session and the beginning of another.



How long does all this usually take? If a member of the Library Association pays his subscription at the beginning of March and opts for membership of the A.A.L., the Section Central Office will be informed by about 5th April. This advice is passed on to the Division immediately and the Divisional Membership Secretary includes the new member's name in the next set of labels which reach Central Office by 10th April. The first copy of the *Assistant Librarian* therefore, which can reach the new member is that dated for May. After that, so long as there is no lapse in opting for membership, the journal will continue to be despatched regularly.

In order to reduce the cost of distribution as much as possible, the Association prefers to deliver the journal to members by the "parcel method" whenever practicable.

## NEWS FROM THE LUNATIC FRINGE

### THE LONGHAIRED BOYS HIT BACK

by JOHN STONEHAM

WHEN WE FIRST cocked a supercilious eyebrow at Mr. Westacott's (let's face it) rather UNGay moral lecture in the June *Assistant*, we were somewhat puzzled. Was this platitudinous castigator of youthful follies really the same corduroyed cherub who recently at Chaucer House addressed us so winningly on the position of the pederast in contemporary society? And was he not, from the awful eminence of his 20-odd summers, reaching down to rebuke some pasteboard creature who had never existed outside the pages of a 20-year-old copy of *Punch*?

Our coarser colleagues, however, unanimously and gleefully claimed to recognise in this quaint "scene de la vie des banlieues" a clear and unmistakeable portrait. "But, my dears, this is *you*," they cried, "Hughie has you this time, formulated, sprawling, as it were, on a pin!"

This is patently untrue. Rough? Unwashed? Unusual clothes? Our waistcoats come from Thomas Wing and we buy our talcum-powder in the Burlington Arcade. If we have, at times, admired Sartre, Matisse and the Rev. Eliot (all, surely, rather vieux jeu by now), we *have* also read Spenser, Macchiavelli and Plato (has Mr. Westacott, we wonder?).

Who, then, *are* these quaintly old-fashioned avant-gardistes whom Mr. W. so prettily apostrophises, and in what bizarre suburban backwater can he have met them? Have the London libraries taken to recruiting assistants from among the dimmer products of the provincial art schools?

We, of course, are High Tories, though we may have had our deviations during those unfortunate 30's (we hope soon to publish a symposium entitled *We were Fabians for the F.B.I.*). We read the *New Statesman*, because Kingsley is rather a dear old comic, but of course the really important journal is *Vogue*. We only discuss our friends' aberrations, and the subjects we do most desperately care about are 2nd Empire furniture and Mr. Magoo.

Mr. Westacott seems to move in the most madly unsmart set, though if he will go to Bohemian Parties he must expect to encounter gauche young things. We find the bohemians far too rough.

Or can he have met them at library school? We found the hot-house atmosphere quite chilling. Students, my dear, in corduroy trousers, studying cataloguing! Though that, of course, was before the exotic *Orchis Ronaldus* of Marylebone was transplanted to Camden Town.



And is not Mr. Westacott being just a little *bitchy* in his scornful rejection of his fellow Local Government Officers? - No wonder they refuse to sit with him, if that is really his attitude.

We find them quite charming, poor dears, in their rugged way. After all, many sports have considerable elegance when played by Magyars, and we ourselves rank films and fornication among the important things in life (should we, then, apply for posts as Town Hall typists?). Many of the L.G.Os. are actually capable of quite coherent speech, and we once met a person from the Borough Engineer's department at the I.C.A.

No, we are not frightened of "these people", or of lonely and frustrated readers. Indeed, we positively *invite* the intimacies of certain members of the public. And if the borrowers do grow a little wearying, we can always leave the counter in the competent hands of the Westacotts and retire to read Rilke in the Gents.

But he is right in one respect. The future depends on *us* as individuals. We pale Palinures of the L.A. must stand firm and assert our solidarity. Let us throw a cocktail party (everybody come as a Beardsley drawing, please) and tell each other how solid we are.

And, Westacott, why not lift your bowler hat from over your eyes and join us? We're not angry with you, you know; just rather hurt.

## MR. PRESIDENT, SIR

A FEW MEMORIES by A. LL. CARVER

IT SO HAPPENED that my first Annual General Meeting was described at the time as one of the most memorable in the history of the Association, although I hasten to add this was not cause and effect. In those days I was very much "on the outside, looking in". For years I had languished in the wilderness—no Branch or Division covered my area until quite recently, and I had had no contact with my professional colleagues. It was therefore a great day for me when I transferred to Portsmouth in March, 1929, and I lost no time in getting acquainted with a famous Division, and, better still, attending an A.G.M., where the familiar names would become real persons to me. This meeting was at Bristol in June, 1929, and involved me in a journey lasting from 7.30 a.m. to 3.30 a.m. the following day. I think I would have walked it if necessary. The programme was as full of good things as a Dickensian Christmas pudding, and was to conclude with consideration of the Amalgamation Proposals (1929 model or Mark I). For the richness of the feast, both mental and physical, you must read the *Library Assistant* of the time. I still remember a glorious organ recital, two noble churches, some fine branches, James Ross as a wonderful host, the stateliness of University Great Hall—and the rain. How it rained, but we never missed a thing. An expert spoke on the majesty of the mighty Avon Gorge and we stood as good as gold as the wet curtains of rain drifted across from the Welsh hills and trickled dismally down our necks. He was a martyr; so were we all.

The A.G.M. itself was conducted with indecent haste; London, it seemed, had a train to catch. As for the Proposals—I was agin 'em. As I saw it then, I was going to lose my Association just as I had caught up with it after years of waiting. I knew little about it, of course, and it was as well that I was unknown and unheard on that day. Ten years later, very much concerned with the Proposals Mark II, I often longed for my erstwhile innocence. One final picture of Bristol. We arrived at the meeting place to find a crowd of some 200, all strangers to me. In view of the weather it was rather a grey sort of crowd, but in the middle

of it was the largest and blackest sombrero I had ever seen, and underneath it were eye-glasses to which were attached a broad, black silk ribbon. The figure stood out like a lighthouse on a clear horizon. I naturally took steps to identify this striking individual, and was told, with supercilious surprise at my ignorance: "That's Johnny O'Leary of Bethnal Green." We shall meet him again later on.

Norwich was too far away for me, but the *Assistant* for July, 1930, has a double-page group of interest to older members, and will I imagine cause amusement to younger ones. 1931 found us at Bath. We viewed the venerable Abbey and the still older Roman Baths (Godliness and Cleanliness, I suppose), and the business meeting was notable in that the Midland Division slammed a resolution at the platform supported by 100 Midland proxy votes. As other divisions were not so represented, this move was ruled out of order. Unusually careless for Jimmy Revie, but you never know. To me, this will always be the "Pork-pie" A.G.M. Messrs. Chivers provided the repast and it was referred to as "a noble lunch". It was indeed. In front of me was a magnificent pork-pie, and I had but one purpose in mind as I dealt with whatever was before me at the time. Alas, when I had cleared decks, I found that deft hands had whisked that toothsome dish away, and I never saw it again. It may perhaps have been for show only. I cannot say, but I was never quite the same man afterwards.

The years slipped away like fields from a train window—Leamington, Derby, London, Sheffield—until 1938 found us at Leicester. I had by now moved up from the back row to somewhere near the front. Nevertheless, I nearly missed this trip for the hotel forgot to call me, and I had to choose quickly between a wash and shave or breakfast. I made St. Pancras looking respectable but feeling hungry. I would rather eat than shave on those Northern lines. We had a civic lunch in a hotel that seems at this distance to have been all marble and plush, and in a room not much smaller than the Albert Hall. Perhaps it seemed that size because I had to return thanks to the Lord Mayor, a great chap whose sole dish was one ice-cream. As he put it to me, "Ee, lad, this is my fourth loonch to-day." Civic honour has its draw-backs. We had a good day in Leicester, excellent programme and a fair A.G.M. A small group of us were stopped by a Press photographer who posed and snapped us, and then said: "You are the Boot and Shoe Operatives crowd, aren't you?" Hang it all, had we been just members it would have been bad enough, but we were all Officers of the Association. Was Arthur Hewitt's face red! Gillett, however, replied as one Northerner to another and saved the dignity of us Southern softies. So we come to 1939 and the Dagenham débâcle. Here was an A.G.M. to end them all, but this is not the place to go into the politics on that memorable day. If members wanted liveliness they certainly got it.

Let me set the scene. The thermometer climbed to 85 degrees and stayed there all day in a London already blistered and dusty. Some of us elected to go by coach across London, which was excellent in theory. In the event what with traffic blocks, roads up and so on, we were hopelessly late long before we sighted the gleaming spires and minarets of Dagenham. I was bundled (no other word for it) through a back entrance, along a corridor, and then through a very small door to find myself on the rostrum of the Civic Hall facing an anxious and perspiring audience. Before I could sit down I heard myself called upon to thank His Worship the Mayor for his speech, which of course I had not heard. Yes, I did it somehow, and went straight on to give my Presidential Address, but you will have to look that up if you are interested. Con-

trary to malicious rumour, it did not lead to hostilities a few months later. After lunch we toured the Ford works, including the foundries and furnaces, and by tea-time we were all well roasted. Perhaps only those who were there can appreciate the evening meeting. Upstairs they were packed in, heat or no heat, and they were howling for blood. In the basement we officers were frantically trying to present a united front. It simply could not be done. Messengers kept warning us they couldn't hold the crowd much longer, but Council was hopelessly split and at last I led our little band out into the arena with a heavy heart. I thought of *Julius Caesar*: "Cry havoc, and let slip the dogs of war". The rest is history, and history must judge who was right and who was wrong on that day. Oh yes, our host. It was O'Leary, of Dagenham, now elevated to the exalted few who have tacked on to their name the name of the system they have created. I told you we should meet him again.

Followed six years of lunacy and then the uneasy peace. Just one more memory. I had nothing to do with the actual programme, but I did persuade Council to try a London meeting divorced from the Weekend Conference, the old Inaugural or anything else. The G.L.D. "did us proud", didn't they? And the A.G.M. showed there is life in the old Association yet. Full marks to the speaker whose masterly condensation of what he had come to say made at least one of his hearers determined to get the whole talk as soon as possible. The speaker's name? Well, look at that Chestertonian (a!most) figure. Isn't it familiar? Of course it is our old friend John G. O'Leary, still haunting my A.G.Ms. after 25 years. And I stupid enough to fear on that far-off day at Bristol that I was attending the obsequies of the A.A.L.

## DATE WITH A COMMITTEE

by JEAN COLE and TERESA HARPER, *Whitley Bay P.L.*

*[Other Divisions than the North Eastern have presented dramatic performances of the kind described in this article—they have even been set to music, as we discovered at Nottingham. This lively account of a successful meeting at Newcastle may perhaps encourage yet further experiments in an extremely stimulating medium].*

THE NORTH EASTERN DIVISION was recently initiated into a new style of library meeting; for instead of the usual speech followed by discussion, they were treated to a "miniature drama", which proved to be a very successful method of showing the incorrect, as well as the correct approach to that very much undiscussed event—The Interview.

What is the "technique of the interview"?

This question is rather a poser as there are so many different techniques; but it might be described as a set of simple rules, which one could use to help present a good impression to an interviewing committee.

It was with this thought in mind that Mr. W. Caldwell, lecturer-in-charge of the Newcastle School of Librarianship, and his students, portrayed some of the techniques which are known to have been used at various times.

After a few words explaining that the "actors" were not working with scripts, but merely from a brief outline of character and style, a short prologue introduced the candidates for the post of Branch Librarian of X-town branch. They were seen gathering in a waiting room, ready for the big event. First came Susan Smart, dressed to kill in black with

startling pink and gold accessories; her obvious intention was to dazzle all the male members of the committee into giving her the post; Winifred Wise followed, a neat personality, who quietly but confidently took her place; a small figure in grey crept in next and began to read a book, which on closer examination proved to be Carnegie's *How to win friends and influence people*; she was followed by a gale of wind, which turned out to be the final candidate, Gertrude Garble, who just couldn't stop talking and succeeded in making the third candidate, Sophie Slow, a bigger bundle of nerves than she was already.

It was unfortunate that Miss Garble was the first to be interviewed, as she was still out of breath when she took her seat. To put her at ease, the chairman asked if she had had a pleasant journey, which seemed to be just the opening she needed—breathlessly she described in great detail the terrible time she had in a draughty train and the chairman was obliged to interrupt to ask her reasons for applying for the post. Her reply was that it was for the sake of experience, as she believed in changing posts frequently. Asked about previous experience, she gave an account of the numerous libraries she had been in, together with a full description of the work she had done in the A.T.S. during the war. She talked at great length about inter-library loan procedure, and questions concerning her work with children resulted in a detailed account of her activities as a Tawny Owl. One committee member asked her views on vivisection, obviously his pet subject, to which Miss Garble was again able to reply at great length.

Her place was taken by Miss Slow, who sidled nervously into the room and sat down without a smile. She kept her head down and was obviously ill at ease, so much so that her replies were inaudible and she was requested more than once to speak up; this only made her more nervous and she dropped her gloves, which were by now screwed into a tight ball, and had to scramble under the table in search of them. She appeared to have no idea why she had applied for the post, and left everyone with the impression that she had been forced into it. Her past experience amounted to six years of packing and unpacking books and though for a moment it seemed that she was about to show initiative when recalling having assisted a reader, she changed her mind and shook her head. Two of the committee slept, no longer interested.

As Miss Smart entered they woke up! Languidly smoking a cigarette, she took her seat without waiting to be asked, and smiled brilliantly at the nearest male, who blew his nose loudly in confusion and retired behind his agenda. She was supremely confident that she could run the library single-handed, even though she had had little experience—"I've been working in a library for more than a year now," she drawled, and began to offer several suggestions for improving the branch.

Miss Wise took her place with a smiling "Thank you". Unlike the others, she addressed all her replies to the chairman himself, except when asked a question by a member of the committee; she remained calm and composed, her hands clasped lightly on her lap, while her answers were all clear and to the point. She stated that she had done a little readers' advisory work, had some experience of control of staff, and although she admitted frankly that she had never worked with children, she said she would do her best in coping with any new situations.

The interview being ended, the committee gave examples of the methods of voting for the candidate of their choice, and this also taught a number of the audience something new.

It is hardly necessary to add that Winifred Wise was appointed the new librarian of X-town Branch Library.

## CORRESPONDENCE

*It has unfortunately been necessary to cut several of these letters owing to shortage of space. Intending contributors are asked to be as brief as possible, and preferably to submit their letters typed.*

### L.A. FINANCES

As I indicated during the discussion at the last A.A.L. Council, it had been my intention to circulate a statement on the Library Association finances, as there has been criticism of the Council, and particularly of myself, for being associated with an increase in L.A. subscriptions, even in a modified form.

At first sight, the excess of income over expenditure for 1953 of over £4,000 suggests that the increase in subscriptions was uncalled for, and the prophets of gloom were too gloomy. This figure must, however, be carefully examined, and it would be unfortunate for this Association to be concerned in any hasty action based on an incomplete understanding of the financial situation.

The most important question to ask in this respect is, will this figure of £4,000 be repeated each year and have added to it the increased subscription income? The answer is, no. The £4,000 is made up, in the main, of non-recurring items. The largest single item was the reduction in capitation payments of approximately £1,850, a cut which has now been restored. Other economy cuts made amounted to about £1,500; subscription income was up by £400, and publications showed a net gain of £500. The only "permanent" economy was the reduction in the cost of the *Library Association Record* by about £1,000.

The publications "profit" is largely due to the sale of publications printed and paid for in previous years. There was no large-scale publishing undertaking during the year, and this will have the effect of reducing potential income in future years. It is an important commercial consideration that turn-over is more important than the actual balance in any one year:

in this respect, the financial statement is not encouraging. I think it will be seen, and a pencil and paper would prove, that without economies now restored, with a normal publishing programme, and without the excess subscriptions, the L.A. would have done little more than break even.

The previous Honorary Treasurer wished to build the reserves of the Association up to a high figure, which required substantially increased subscriptions. Your representatives at the time agreed with the principle of increasing reserves, but disagreed on the rate at which it was proposed to increase them. The balance sheet next year will, I hope, prove that the modified subscriptions will enable a reasonable amount to be transferred to general reserve, in addition to such necessary reserves as repairs.

It should further be remembered that the A.A.L. was the first to draw the L.A.'s attention to the probable need for an increase in subscriptions and have at all times been insistent that the essential services provided for members should be not only maintained but improved.

It is my personal opinion, biased, perhaps, as a member of the L.A. Finance Committee, that credit, not criticism, is due to the Honorary Treasurer for the state of the balance. The balance sheet for 1954, as I said at Llandudno, will be the real test.

W. TYNEMOUTH.

### LITERATURE AND LIBRARIANSHIP

Mr. Hargrave mistakes, I think, both the spirit and the letter of much of what I had to say in my article and, as a result, many of his shots have missed their mark. Perhaps I can best make my meaning clear by deal-

ing with his points one by one.

He questions the statement that I took from the Editorial of the Autumn 1953 *Library Review* to the effect that students may do brilliantly at Library School and yet be unable to sustain a literary conversation with the average, intelligent reader. This, Mr. Hargrave maintains, is untrue on the ground that the average, intelligent reader knows little about literature.

More important, he states that it would not matter, anyway, if the statement were true, as few of our readers want "Literature," and that we have wasted too much time in the past studying the subject. Mr. Hargrave overstates his case. He tells us elsewhere that subject knowledge in a general library is pointless; here he says that a knowledge of English Literature is equally useless. Debating points apart, it does seem to me to be of the very essence of librarianship that its practitioners should be widely read in English literature, whatever else their interests. A librarian ignorant here can neither command the respect of the public he serves nor guide those with legitimate cultural aspirations who, foolishly, come to him for help. Worse, there can be the most appalling gaps in his stock for all he knows. I hope Mr. Hargrave will forgive me if I quote the Scottish Report at him again: "we desire to emphasize our belief that the successful librarian should have a wide cultural background, a love of books, and a keen desire and aptitude for serving the public."

I maintain that we cannot do our jobs as librarians properly if we have no subject knowledge, no matter whether we are dealing with a beginner or a specialist in the subject in question. In my experience, after showing an enquirer the resources of the library (in my case a large lending library) in his particular field, I am often asked which is the most suitable work for his purpose. To answer that question at all well more than a superficial knowledge of that subject is required. It may be objected that the individual librarian cannot be a

human encyclopaedia, that he can only study one subject effectively in addition to his technical studies (as I suggest in my article). Even so the problem is not insuperable, and in a library with several qualified staff, a fairly wide subject coverage can thus be achieved. It is a fallacy to believe that you can exploit books effectively without knowing anything about their contents.

Mr. Hargrave, finally, argues that to incorporate an academic subject into our professional examination and exempt the graduate from taking that subject is to reorganise the profession for the benefit of the graduate. I do not think that this is a fair construction to put on my arguments. We both agree that an academic qualification is "highly desirable": if we don't accept this method of attaining it, the only alternative for the non-graduate is to take a London University external degree. (I was astonished that anyone could interpret my remarks about external degrees as being deprecatory—they were meant to be anything but that).

As for the graduates having exemption from this part of finals, it seems to me no more than just. A degree takes three years, followed by two years in the Forces. All this time the entrant to the profession straight from school is plugging away at his exams.—he can often continue his professional studies in the Services. To expect the graduate to take the academic part of the professional exam. as well as the technical when he is already well behind his non-graduate competitor seems to me inequitable, particularly when he will be duplicating work he has already done. Other professions accord some recognition to graduates: the aspiring solicitor, for example, has only to serve three years' articles instead of five years, and is exempted from the preliminary examination; the intermediate and the final, which he has to sit, are more practical than his degree exams in law.

PETER CHURLEY,  
Senior Assistant, Nottingham P.L.

## STUDENTS' OTHER PROBLEMS

Two further questions might have been added to Mr. Tomlinson's helpful article in the last issue concerning the machinery of examinations.

The first is—why aren't Examiners' Reports made available to students? Every six months one sees a coy little note in the *Record* announcing that these reports are available to bona fide tutors. How the tutors use them is apparently left to them. I know of one who reads the report in full to his class, others read extracts, while some read none. This inequality resulting from different tutors' attitudes is quite unfair, but is inevitable so long as the L.A. pursues its ridiculous policy of semi-secrecy. Could it be that the examiners dare not face examination?

The second query arises from one of Mr. Tomlinson's. Why doesn't the L.A. tell who is examining us in each subject? To say, as Mr. Palmer does, that it is "by decision of the Council" is no explanation. If you have the right contacts you can, in fact, usually find out the names of the examiners in your subject. With this information, the wise candidate will examine periodical files to discover the examiners' views on various matters and see that these views are mentioned, where appropriate, in answering the examination questions.

The L.A.'s public relations policy (or lack of it) has often been criticised. Equally valid criticism may be made of the Council's private relations policy—to its own members. Secrecy in the above two matters inevitably leads to unfairness and suspicion of favouritism. In the interests of students, the A.A.L. should demand a change.

W. G. SMITH,

Branch Librarian, Wandsworth P.L.

## THE JUNIOR BORROWER

Looking back at her youthful reading, Miss Solomon says: "I feel now that in re-reading books I was perhaps wasting reading time". It is an understandable feeling; but I sug-

gest that the regrets are unnecessary. Because we work with books, and are daily tantalised by fleeting glimpses into hidden treasure, we are apt to feel that we must introduce all our resources to every reader. It is not so. In childhood particularly—and even in later years—the reading that has most significance is the re-reading of the hallowed favourites. Living with them until they become a part of us, we unconsciously absorb the ideals and emotions, the magic and the wonder they portray. The very rhythms of the language weave themselves into our minds. From these things is built the fundamental approach to life and literature which will characterise a child's later years. I look back on my own devotion to *The Wind in the Willows* and only now realise how thoroughly it paved the way to "the realms of gold". I remember how for years I turned in stress and distress to the healing of *Little Women*.

Of course I am speaking of the good books, those deeply conceived and vividly written. But these are in fact the books to which children return; like us, they rarely re-read their pot-boilers.

By all means let us encourage our youngsters to be adventurous in their reading. (Who shall deliver us from the B. ton routine?) But let us rejoice when a child comes to the exit with shining eyes: "This is the eighth time I've had it: it's super!"

ANNE W. ROE,

Children's Librarian, Blackpool P.L.

Jennifer Solomon tells us she was "that comparative rarity," a junior borrower turned librarian. I belong to that other larger school of assistants who did not borrow library books during their childhood. For some unknown reason I was not only scared of library assistants, but avoided libraries altogether. During school holidays we were given a list of books, one of which must be read before next term, but nothing would induce me to take the list to the library, though I now know that the



staff there would have been pleased to help me.

I was fortunate in that there have always been plenty of books at home, so that I was never without anything to read, but I now realize what a lot I missed in not making use of the wider variety available at the local children's library.

My bookshelves are still lined with many of the books I enjoyed as a child. A whole shelf is taken up with "Bumper" books with such titles as *Tuck-a-bed tales* and *My great big book*, and although they may be of little literary value, I cannot bear to part with them. Later I read the Ameliananne and Rupert books; Beatrix Potter and Alison Uttley were my favourite authors, and I read the short stories of Margaret Baker and Elizabeth Clark again and again. At seven I graduated to the Mary Plain books and Grace James's John and Mary books. Then came the usual craze for horse books and school stories. The best of the horse stories was the series by Katherine Hull and Pamela Whitlock. One of my favourite books was, and still is, *The family from one end street*, by Eve Garnett, and another was *The wind in the willows*.

But there were so many books which I could have enjoyed and would have read had I known they existed. I did not meet Winnie the Pooh until I was too old to appreciate him fully; I had not heard of Pamela Brown and Noel Streatfeild, and the Sue Barton books were unknown to me. I read little non-fiction, and it was not till I started library work that I realized how much of it was readable and interesting. Considering the lack of choice I had in reading, I was very fortunate in the books which came my way, but had there been more co-operation between the school and the library in the town where I used to live, I feel things would have been different, and I would have become a regular library borrower.

WENDY HARRIS,  
*Assistant, Stoke Newington P.L.*

## LUNATIC FRINGE

It is to be hoped that the Association of Assistant Librarians will disassociate itself from the wildly irresponsible article appearing under the title of "Lunatic Fringe" in the June-July issue of the *Assistant Librarian*.

Such a statement as "most local government officers are dead from the neck upwards" can only invoke justified antagonism, and at the same time damage the prestige of the Library profession.

I respectfully suggest that Mr. Westacott leaves off diagnosing mental climates, and instead thinks hard about the dangers of sweeping generalisations.

C. P. AUGER,  
*Assistant Librarian, British Cast Iron Research Association.*

[See also article on pp. 128-9.—Hon. Ed.].

## PROFESSIONAL— NON-PROFESSIONAL

It is understandable that Miss Wild should choose to make her attack (*Assistant Librarian*, May, 1954) upon the Non-Professional Assistant rather than upon Mr. E. V. Corbett, who propounds the same basic arguments. The charitable view is that she did not read his article "Examinations and Recruitment," which is unfortunate, for, and here I quote, "many of the best junior assistants are to be found among those who fail to pass Entrance." This, together with the statement of the Non-Professional Assistant that, "I like . . . using my intelligence to the best of my ability, and curiously enough, I like books, both handling them and reading them" makes any objection to letting such people loose among the public high principled to the extent of priggishness.

The employment, as such, of non-professional staff was advocated by the L.A. in its 1943 Proposals, and was therefore already a well established talking point. That the plan has not yet been put into action cannot be used as a criticism of the



principle. After all, the B.N.B. and open access were not bad because they were such a long time coming. The advantages of division into technical and Service staff are numerous, and economy, less frustration (not only in the 58 per cent., but also in the qualified assistant doing non-professional work), and improvement of professional status are three of the most important.

There is ample room in the profession for those willing to sit for the numerous examinations, but there is no cause to bury our heads in the text books and ignore the substantial percentage of female junior assistants who are honest enough to admit that their aim is Mrs., not F.L.A. This percentage would be much higher if we add those who profess to scorn marriage until it is in sight. By accepting the fact that so many fail to reach the chartered level, and have no wish to sit for examinations at all, we can turn the profession into a far more powerful one than it is at the moment—and this development will be to the advantage of all.

J. P. E. FRANCIS,  
*Lending Librarian, Thurrock, P.L.*

### THE A.A.L. AND THE NON-PUBLIC LIBRARIAN

Mr. H. R. Klieneberger deserves our gratitude for bringing to our notice the fact that both L.A. and A.A.L. do not receive sufficient support from the staffs of non-public libraries. He has, I think, proved his point that this lack of co-operation entails a loss both to the public library world and to the bewildering multitude of special and academic libraries of this country. I should like to add a more human plea, based upon my own experience of the A.A.L.

In this south-western backwater of the library world I should have had no contact whatever with fellow-librarians of any type unless I had from the beginning taken an interest in A.A.L. activities, and later in those of the S.W. Branch of the Library

Association. I often have great difficulty in following the jargon of the public library world, with its eternal talk of A.P.T. scales and issue statistics, but I consider that I have benefited greatly from the friendships I have made and have become a slightly less imperfect librarian because of them. In return I believe that I have been able to show my friends that an academic librarian can be a human being after all. I have found that my non-specialist colleagues have always been willing to meet me more than half-way, and I suspect that this "paper curtain" between public and non-public librarians has been set up chiefly by the latter. There is a strong trace of intellectual snobbery in the affair. It is possible that a specialist may have higher intelligence and have had a more extensive training, but he is not always the better human being because of that. It is only by free intercourse and co-operation between all types of librarians that our best service will be given to the community whose servants we are.

ALLAN BROCKETT,  
*Sub-librarian, Roborough Library,  
University College of the South West  
of England, Exeter.*

### ENGLISH LITERATURE

After closely studying the examination papers in English Literature set for the Registration Examination between Summer, 1949, and Winter, 1952, I should like to endorse Miss Jackson's views (*The Assistant*, March issue) on the futility of the examination as at present constituted.

The faults common to all the papers are a total lack of any clear purpose, a thoroughly capricious choice of authors and books included, a ridiculously small choice of questions, and far too much slovenly phrasing in the framing of the questions.

The paper attempts to cover some six hundred years of literature with ten or twelve questions, which number is by no means adequate, and which, in view of the fact that the candidate is expected to answer six of

them, can hardly be said to offer a choice at all. It might appear reasonable to suppose that this restriction of choice would result in the rigorous application of the injunction of the syllabus to study "the chief writers and their works", and produce papers restricted to the most important of authors. Unfortunately, this is by no means true. Of eighty-one authors specifically mentioned in the eight papers I have examined, only twenty-eight could reasonably be placed among our "chief writers", and of this small number only nine occurred more than once. Among authors included in these papers were Darwin, Hobbes, Mill, Prynne, and Baxter, not one of whom is sufficiently important from a literary point of view to justify inclusion at the cost of totally ignoring Pope, Marlowe, and Wordsworth, none of whom gets as much as half a question in any of these papers. So the candidate knows before he sees the paper that about two-thirds of the writers specifically mentioned will be of the second, or lower, rank—which is hardly likely to encourage him to read the "chief writers".

All too often, the questions asked appear to require no knowledge which could not be obtained by reading history of literature rather than works of literature. Surely, to ask for a "chronological survey" of Milton's works "naming the principal literary forms in which he wrote" is to delight and help the name-and-date grubber at the expense of the student who has preferred to spend his time reading Milton's poetry? Similarly, some of the questions are so badly worded that it is quite impossible for anyone with a real knowledge of literature to decide what the examiners want. What, for example, did the examiners imagine they meant when they asked candidates to "describe the chief poetical works of either Spenser or Milton"? The grubber will happily write down all he can remember of what he has read about Spenser or Milton—the student who has read some of either will most likely be at a loss to find any meaning in the ques-

tion at all.

The present examination is flabby, admirably fitted only to discourage the study of literature and bring professional standards into disrepute. Drastic alteration is vital. There must be a wider choice of questions, a greater emphasis on the really important writers, and questions must be more carefully worded to leave no reasonable doubt about their meaning and to make a reading knowledge of literature necessary for success. In short, English Literature must mean a knowledge of *literature*, not of books *about literature*.

LESLIE E. MILTON,  
Assistant, Kent Co. L.

[A draft revised syllabus for this examination is published in the *L.A. Record* for May (p. 174). It provides a choice between two periods: (i), Chaucer up to but excluding the Romantic Revival, or (ii), the Romantic Revival up to the present day. The draft will be further discussed by the L.A. Council in October, and if approved the syllabus will be first used in the Summer examination, 1956.—Hon. Ed.]

### A.A.L. CONFERENCE

Surely an assistants' conference might be expected to comprise a few more people under about 23 years of age than we saw this year at Nottingham?

It is to be hoped that not lack of interest, but simply lack of means is the reason for the situation. If we want our younger members to take a livelier part in A.A.L. activities, to have some views of their own on current issues and interest in elections, should we not seek some means of assisting their attendance at our conferences? I suggest that every staff guild should consider the possibility of paying all or most expenses of at least one of its younger members at next year's conference. This is not a new idea, but one which does not appear to be sufficiently widespread.

JEAN BINDER,  
Reference Librarian, St. Albans P.L.

## NATIONAL SERVICE

I have been extremely interested in the correspondence in the *Assistant Librarian* on the problems of the National Serviceman following his chosen career as a Librarian, and feel that at least those men who find themselves in Catterick Camp will have no difficulty in keeping in touch with professional matters, for this authority has recently opened a full-time Branch Library in the Camp for the use of both civilians and all members of H.M. Forces.

The Branch Library has a Lending Department with a shelf stock of 6,000 volumes and a Reference Library of 1,000, together with a Children's Department also containing 1,000 volumes. In the circumstances, therefore, I think that this Branch should form a very useful background to the National Serviceman who is an assistant Librarian for, if he uses this Branch, he will certainly be able to keep in touch with all professional matters.

Particularly would I like to stress one or two of the points made by your correspondents.

- (a) He will be able to keep in touch with current literature.
- (b) The Reference Department will provide him with a room for quiet study.
- (c) The staff will be only too pleased to allow him to use the *Library Association Record* and the *Assistant Librarian*.

In fact the staff will be pleased to see all assistant Librarians at the Branch at all times. Lastly, the reference to a National Serviceman attending divisional meetings in the area; you will be interested to know that the Northern Branch is holding its July meeting at the Catterick Camp Branch Library.

S. G. BEAGLEY,

*Librarian, North Riding Co. L.*

I went into the Army in March, 1951, as a private in the R.A.E.C. I did twelve weeks' basic training with the Royal Artillery at Oswestry, after which I was posted to Beaconsfield, the R.A.E.C. depot.

At Beaconsfield I found that the fact that I was a librarian was ignored and I was to be trained as a teacher. Although the idea of teaching English, mathematics, science and map reading to hardened regular soldiers did not appeal to me in the least, I went on with the course. There were several other librarians on the course, but most of us failed, the Army apparently having no interest in librarians. The one or two librarians who did pass the course succeeded because they possessed genuine teaching ability; I doubt, however, if the Army ever made use of them as librarians. It is interesting to note that the nearest that I ever got to working in an Army library was when I was detailed to sweep it out.

A. VARLEY,

*Assistant, Shipley P.L.*

I heartily endorse Mr. Davinson's comments on subscriptions and fees. On renewing my subscription in January, I had first to pay a further guinea for the previous year which I had allowed to lapse on being called up. This, with the £2 7s. 6d. for a correspondence course, was a fairly substantial sum out of £1 10s. a week.

The question of studying for examinations is further complicated for those abroad. Apart from the difficulty of studying in a tent with three other (not always quiet) people, there is the difficulty of obtaining books. I can obtain only a proportion of the books listed as essential for the English Literature course, although the garrison library serving 10,000 troops is located in this camp. Most other professional associations provide courses through the Army, and it is possible to take courses in banking or accountancy, or even for a degree.

The libraries here are staffed mainly by the wives and daughters of servicemen living here, who have no knowledge of librarianship, whilst National Servicemen with civilian experience spend their two years in other jobs.

PTE. D. G. APPS,  
130 Camp Staff (Special),  
El Ballah, M.E.L.F.12, Egypt.

## COUNCIL NOTES

MAY 6.

"POSTS advertised at inadequate salaries" seems to be a permanent feature of the agenda these days, and it is to be hoped that the constant attention at national and divisional level to this problem will lead to greater co-operation from all individual members of the Association. Without this co-operation, no effective action can be taken against any authority seeking professional services at cut-price rates. The history of the immediate past is not a happy one in this respect, but it is heartening to think that there are some members who have realised that a temporary gain may be a bad thing for the individual, as it most certainly is for the profession at large. It is possible to understand the action of a man who moves up one grade for the sake of his wife, two children, dog, and the goldfish—against, we hope, his better judgment—but many members of the Council cannot understand the mentality of those authorities who appoint from a list of candidates who, goldfish apart, put themselves before their profession. The only explanation is that they represent, or pretend to represent, areas in which the quality of the library service provided is of little matter. In that case, individual members do the profession as a whole a disservice by providing them with material, however inadequate, and at the same time giving them their answer to the Library Association; "Well, qualified members did apply".

The Committee reports, as usual, produced a comprehensive summary of the Association's work and those often bright little debates when members of the Council not appointed to a particular committee endeavour to show that they should have been.

The Publications Committee, having heard of the sale of publications now available, were told of the progress being made on an impressive list of new publications. In addition to Mallaber's *Primer of bibliography*, now due, and the first parts of the new *A.A.L. Guide*, volume 2, the Council heard of a list of *proposed* new publications, including the following:—

*Introduction to county library practice; Primer of work with young people; Primer of non-book materials; Primer of library co-operation; Basic staff manual; General illustrations index Introduction to archives; Primer of building techniques; Primer of library bookbinding; Aspects of administration.*

These are, of course, only provisional titles, indicating the subject, and the acting Chairman of the Press and Publications Committee assured inquirers that the *Primer of building techniques* would have a more suitable title so that there would be no suggestion that bricklaying and plastering should be added to the study of practical stoking, too often necessary for librarians who like to keep the readers warm.

The Education Committee, having considered several changes and proposed changes in the L.A. syllabus, went on to make the practical proposal to the L.A. that the House and Library Committee be asked to explore the possibility of using the cheapest postal service in the loan of books to students.

Apart from its necessary examination of the Association's finances, the Finance and General Purposes Committee decided to recommend the appointment of an Honorary Assistant Secretary in view of the increasing work of the Association, and discussed the problem of the growing archives of the Association. The agenda for the 59th Annual General

Meeting, which has since been held, was discussed, and the Council agreed to an amendment to Rules, bringing Greater London Division into a more correct proportional basis of representation with the rest of the country, and decided to oppose the motions seeking for a change in correspondence course administration and a desire to give defaulters increased privileges.

Some members of the Council then went on to criticize the Honorary Secretary for having had anything to do with the proposal to increase Library Association subscriptions in however modified a form, in view of the balance shown by the L.A. at the end of 1953. A summary of the Honorary Secretary's reply appears elsewhere in this issue.

Arising out of this discussion, there was an unsuccessful motion that in view of the high total of the credit balance of the L.A. for 1953, the L.A. be approached to restore the old level of subscriptions for members engaged in library service and receiving a salary under £375 per annum. The motion was heavily defeated, but those in favour desired their names to be recorded, namely, Messrs. Colehan, Phillips, W. A. Smith, Taylor, and Miss E. K. Wilson. The Council then adopted by a narrow majority a second proposal that when the balance sheet is presented at the Annual General Meeting in 1955, the Library Association should give consideration to the adjustment and possible alleviation of the subscription scales at present in force.

The Council heard with pleasure that the Midland Division was making arrangements to hold the 1955 Week-end Conference at Bir-Birmingham—and it was decided to set up a special sub-committee to arrange the programme.

The Council then accepted a motion from the Greater London Division "That the Council should proceed with the proposal to prepare a report on working conditions and welfare in non-public libraries", together with an offer to prepare a report at divisional level to be submitted to the Council as a basis for discussion.

Before the end of one of the shortest Councils on recent record (even so, it was a minute after five), the Council heard an unofficial explanation of the interesting progressive action taken by Croydon in endeavouring to make the N.J.C. scales more attractive and sensible. It is hoped to hear more of this in September.

W.T.

## ROUND THE DIVISIONS—8

# MANCHESTER AND DISTRICT

ALTHOUGH the Manchester and District Division was created as recently as 1947, it shares with the Liverpool and District Division the traditions of the earlier North Western Division of the A.A.L., which originated in 1899. In those early days when the formation of a North Western Branch of the L.A.A. was first considered, assistants were exhorted to "petition their chiefs for sympathetic help".

To-day, such is the manner in which we take our hard won rights for granted, many chiefs petition their staffs to take a part in professional affairs!

The present Division draws it 492 members from an area which includes such widely separated towns as Crewe, Colne and Macclesfield, and meetings are therefore held as far as possible in the most accessible centres. About

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*As long as you are on the map, we shall be pleased to serve you (by Special Air Edition, if desired). Just drop a line to KEESSING'S, KEYNSHAM, BRISTOL.*

seven such meetings are held annually and in recent years the Division has organised film shows, a Centenary Year dinner dance, debates and works visits, in addition to formal meetings. One memorable occasion was an International Night, when nearly 200 members packed the International Club in Manchester to hear foreign librarians speaking about library service and development in their own countries. More recently another "standing room only" occasion was a meeting at which four assistants who had been "interne" librarians in the United States and Canada, gave details of their experiences.

These were two of the high spots, although despairing programme committees confronted with poor attendance figures may find some consolation in the fact that less than 30 people turned up to explain "What's wrong with the A.A.L.?" Each year a joint meeting is held with the Liverpool and District Division. The current programme includes a talk on literature by an English master from the Manchester Grammar School, a meeting at which three chief librarians answer any questions put to them by assistants, and a joint meeting with the Youth Libraries Section. Social activities include a trip on the Manchester Ship Canal, a day's outing to Chatsworth House in Derbyshire, and a dance to be held in association with the Manchester Public Libraries Staff Association.

From its inception the Division has sought to increase the interest and enthusiasm of members, and particular attention has been paid to younger members studying for Library Association examinations. An Annual Week-end School has been held at Lyme Hall, Disley, for a number of years, and pre-examination "brains trusts" have also been a feature of the activities organised for students. Study facilities in the Division are excellent, with many outstanding library systems only a few miles apart and such famous libraries as the Manchester Central Library, John Rylands Library, and Chetham's

Library close at hand. The Manchester School of Librarianship is also on our doorstep and there are adequate facilities for both full-time and part-time students.

Together with the North Western Branch of the Library Association and the Liverpool and District Division, the Division publishes the *North Western Newsletter*, a lively and informative printed journal which contains many contributions from younger members of the profession. Another publication sponsored by the Division was the *Register of Methods . . . in the North Western Area*, published in 1951 in association with the North Western Branch of the Library Association. Two former Chairmen of the Division, G. B. Cotton and A. Glencross, were the compilers of the recently published *Fiction Index*.

An average of six Divisional Committee meetings are held each year, the Committee consisting of the Honorary Officers and 12 members who are elected annually. The Division has always recognized the interests of non-public librarians, and 3 members of the present Committee are from special libraries. Up to 6 members of the Division may attend Committee meetings as observers without the right of speaking or voting. Representatives of the Division are present at meetings of the Library Association North Western Branch Council, and the Education and Publications Committees of the Council. A close link has therefore been maintained between Branch and Division, and our relationship with these bodies has been one of co-operation and understanding, and has done much to further the interests of members in the North West.

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## BOOKS FOR STUDENTS

A.A.L. GREATER LONDON DIVISION. *Union list of reference books*.  
Ed. by A. J. Walford. 1954. (5s. 6d. from Hon. Secretary, G.L.D.,  
Tooting Branch Library, Mitcham Road, S.W.17).

This work is a companion to the *Union list of bibliographies* published in 1950. It shows the locations of 400 reference books in libraries in the same area as before, going as far out as Colchester, Southend, Reading and Watford. It includes two University libraries, seven county libraries, the Science Museum and the L.C.C. Education Library, the N.C.L., American Library, Patent Office and Guildhall libraries and others to a total of 80.

The list is in Dewey order with broad subject headings. At the beginning of many of the sections are listed annuals and quick reference material "represented in the great majority of libraries" in order to "round off the list". It seems strange to find on the first page that *Chambers' encyclopaedia world survey* and the *Encyclopaedia Britannica year book* are in the "rounding-off" list, and their parent works are in the main location list. Do some libraries have the *Survey* and the *Year book* and not the main work? Perhaps the chief criticism of the list arises out of this. If a title is so well represented that it has well over 40 locations to it, there is not a lot of point in including it. Surely a list of this nature is there to help find the not so common reference work? On this score the two encyclopaedias would come out (*Chambers'* has 71 locations, *Britannica*, 74). So would *Hastings Dictionary of the Bible*, the *Oxford dictionary of nursery rhymes*, the *Shorter Oxford dictionary*, *Fowler, Cassell's German dictionary*, the *Oxford atlas* and *Titles and forms of address*.

If such titles have to go in much space would have been saved by listing the libraries *not holding* them. Or would that be too unorthodox? In the space saved it would have been useful to see Wolf's *History of science, technology and philosophy in the 16th-18th centuries*, the new edition of *Landolt-Börnstein*, Fletcher's invaluable *Index of mathematical tables*, Probst and Comrie's *Civil engineering reference book*, *Physikalische Wörterbuch* and the *Instrument manual* to name only a few from my own subject fields.

Hyamson's *Dictionary of universal biography* is here, but not many of the dozen or so larger works he gives for further reference. The *National cyclopaedia of American biography*, too, is surely worth a place.

Nearly 300 of the titles are in Winchell and the item numbers in that work are given, making it an easy matter to turn up more details of the title wanted. Perhaps Winchell explains why only one of the B.S.I. glossaries appears—that on aeronautical terms. Those on electrical engineering and telecommunications are just as important, but Winchell does not give them.

It seems strange that only one public library has the *International critical tables* and the *Elsevier encyclopedia*, but it is good to know that Didot-Bottin is so well represented that it appears in the "quick reference" section.

There is an index of authors and some titles. The work is well produced and should become a best seller in the London area. Perhaps the next edition could include more of the not so common reference works which assistants undoubtedly have difficulty in finding.

L. L. ARDERN.



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